



There Is Only One Carl MacDowell



"If you have any questions now, or later, just check with Carl MacDowell. You will find that there is nothing about the university unknown to Carl."

—CHARLES DUNCAN

His name and picture seldom appeared in any university publication. He never graced the stage of a major event, commencement or otherwise. He toiled in the background from the day he stepped onto the Rice campus in June 1967.

His quiet demeanor and, some say, his Maine heritage earned him the respect of the campus community, particularly the presidents and provosts, deans and department chairs he spent considerable time working with for more than three decades.

Although his name will not appear on any document noting the advancements Rice has made during the past 32 years, Carl MacDowell's contributions to the construction of a solid foundation for the next generation of students, faculty, staff, and administrators are legion. His tenure as assistant to the president spans three presidents—Norman Hackerman, George Rupp, and Malcolm Gillis—and includes numerous changes to the campus landscape. So when MacDowell walks out of his Lovett Hall office in December to start his retirement from the post he has held since Jimmy Carter was in the White House, an era will end.

And it will end with a style and grace that has marked MacDowell's tenure as a force and voice behind the administrators and academicians who have transformed Rice into one of the world's leading private research universities.

"I chose Carl... as assistant to the president in 1976 on the basis of an interview," says Rice president emeritus Norman Hackerman. "He struck me as being rational, no-nonsense, and succinct. After the appointment was made and he accepted, I learned that the assessment was accurate, but there were certain other characteristics that I found highly desirable as well."

"He is clearly an honest man who would debate issues vigorously. But when decisions were made contrary to his stated position, he would still carry out the necessary actions as effectively as he did for those he agreed with. I clearly hold him in high esteem."

When MacDowell arrived on the Rice campus—as assistant to William Gordon, dean of science and engineering—Rice was in a growth mode. Construction of a new men's college was announced in September of that year, and the Hobby Foundation donated \$500,000 to the university to establish the William Petus Hobby Chair in American History as part of Rice's \$33 million campaign.

In 1976, the year MacDowell became assistant to the president, the campus was recovering from damages caused by a major summer flood. The electrical distribution system was not fully operational when students enrolled for the fall semester, and parts for the central air conditioning system were being remanufactured, with delivery expected in January.

A lot has happened since then. As MacDowell prepares to leave campus, Rice is engaged in a \$500 million fund-raising campaign to support initiatives outlined in its stra-

tegic plan—Rice: The Next Century. A new Humanities Building is under construction, ground has been broken on a new Wiess College, a new Graduate House opened this fall, and the university is now recognized nationally and internationally as a premier teaching and research university that is affordable to any student willing to tackle its challenging academic standards.

"[Carl] has been as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar," says Charles W. Duncan, Jr., chair of the Rice Board of Governors from 1982 to 1996. "During my service on the board, and particularly while I was chairman, Carl was a veritable clearinghouse of information about every area of the university. He kept those who needed to know apprised of what was going on, what had happened, and what was about to happen. He has carried out his duties in a low-key, professional fashion and always exhibited poise and efficiency. The entire Rice community, in my opinion, owes Carl a tremendous debt of gratitude, and I wish only the best for him on his retirement."

When Rupp moved into the Office of the President in 1985, he found an assistant who could offer him institutional knowledge essential to managing a school with the size and scope of Rice.

"Carl's training as an engineer had shaped his administrative style," says Rupp, who is now president of Columbia University. "His approach is analytical, structured, often quantitative. He is imaginative in problem solving—but within the constraints of the data, the givens, that define the problem to be solved."

One of the most noteworthy events of Rice's past three decades was the 1990 Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations. MacDowell worked his behind-the-scenes magic in attracting, hosting, and making the most of the event for the benefit of the university.

"He was impressively adept in negotiating with the advance people and bureaucrats we had to deal with," says Rupp, who was president at the time of the international confab.

"CARL GAINED THE TRUST OF GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND BOARD MEMBERS, AND, ABOVE ALL, THE PRESIDENTS HE SERVED." —MALCOLM GILLIS

"But he also was creative in devising ways that hosting this event could contribute to the long-term positioning of Rice as an outstanding institution of higher education."

When Gillis became president of Rice in 1993, then-board chair Duncan "was clear